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Federal report says to seal up asbestos at Iron Horse Park

By Bob Jeltsch

The Federal Center for Disease Control has issued a report recommending action be taken to cover exposed asbestos at Iron Horse Park.

According to Richard Leighton, project manager for the Superfund site, the CDC this week recommended further study of the abandoned Johns-Manville asbestos landfill before remedial action is taken.

But he said sealing the area would be done before the final cleanup at the site is implemented.

He said exactly what will be done and when has not yet been determined.

"I don't get the sense that they're saying it's an immediate health hazard," Leighton said. "They do say there is a heavily wooded area separating the landfill from houses on Pond Street."

Leighton explained that samples the EPA took last fall were "biased samples," meaning that they were taken in places where asbestos was thought to be exposed.

Now what needs to be done, he said, is a further study of the area to determine the extent of exposed asbestos.

He said the matter has been referred to the EPA's

Environmental Services Division in Lexington.

The asbestos landfill has been a major concern of local citizens since Iron Horse Park was named to the Federal Superfund list last August.

Superfund Action Committee Chairwoman Sharon Chacralian said when the asbestos was first reported in samples several weeks ago that the exposed area should be capped immediately.

She said the reason the material was exposed in the first place was that it was improperly covered and therefore the cover washed away.

Leighton said he did know what immediate action the Environmental Services Division would recommend, but the standard for the final covering of such a site is two feet of impervious clay.

Chacralian has said she does not expect that kind of action immediately but some intermediate steps should be taken to make the area safer.

A series of other samples were taken at the site in December, including soil samples, and ground and surface water samples.

Leighton said that some of these samples have been analyzed and the results should be available late next week.